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SIPDIS

2ND C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADD/DEL REFS, TEXT PARA 2, 3)

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: KARZAI ON DOSTUM

REF: A. STATE 064621
[1](#)B. 2008 KABUL 3104
[1](#)C. KABUL 1426
[1](#)D. KABUL 1914

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Classified By: Classified by Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: We continue to press President Karzai and his supporters not only to prevent Dostum's return to Afghanistan, but also to disassociate Karzai from Dostum. We are arguing that Dostum's return would be a significant distraction to the campaign, and that any candidate who seeks Dostum's endorsement might trade short-term electoral gains - if any - for long-term suspicion by the international community. End summary.

The Palace on Dostum

[1](#)2. (S) At a July 14 meeting with Palace Chief of Staff Mohammad Daudzai, Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone discussed the current status of Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, urging that Karzai do all possible to keep Dostum in Turkey (ref A) and out of Afghanistan. Per ref B, Dostum has been residing in Turkey since 2008. Since then, Karzai has brokered a deal in which Dostum endorsed Karzai to sway the Junbesh/Uzbek vote in the August presidential elections (ref C). Ricciardone reminded Daudzai that the USG now supports an investigation into allegations of war crimes against Dostum, and that his return to Afghanistan would further weaken Karzai's standing at home and abroad. The damage to foreign friends' ability to continue supporting Afghanistan would outweigh any benefit Karzai received in domestic politics. Ricciardone reminded Daudzai that Ambassador Eikenberry has given the same message to Karzai in a separate July 14 meeting.

[1](#)3. (S) Daudzai responded that he has served as Karzai's principal point of contact with Dostum and has maintained frequent communication with him since his departure in December 2008. He confirmed that Dostum originally had agreed to remain in Turkey indefinitely, but now has asked to return before the elections. (Per ref C, Palace staff speculate that in exchange for his support, Dostum would return to a high level position in a re-elected Karzai's Cabinet.) Daudzai indicated that no deal on a future appointment has been concluded.

[1](#)4. (S) Daudzai said the Afghan government has no legal authority to prevent Dostum's return. The law gives no authority to the GIROA to exile its citizens, so Dostum has a right to return to Afghanistan. Politically, Karzai cannot ask the Turkish government to detain a citizen, particularly as no pending legal charges exist against Dostum. Daudzai

admitted that he has not asked Dostum to remain in Turkey during their frequent phone conversations. Ricciardone suggested Daudzai tell Dostum the Palace would not welcome his return, noting the complications it would cause, or that Karzai should pass such a message to the Turks through intelligence or other discreet channels.

15. (S) Daudzai responded again that Karzai could not be seen to attempt to block Dostum's return. Explaining that he was speaking "personally" and without Karzai's authorization, Daudzai said: "Most of the people around the President believe that Dostum's return would result in more votes for him. I believe this too. Nonetheless, I don't trust Dostum.

Once he returned, there would be nothing to prevent him from violating any promises to us - he could switch sides for a better deal. Therefore, I personally would prefer that he not return before the elections, and I'd be happy if the U.S. could use its influence with the Turks to prevent release of Dostum at this time." Ricciardone responded that the Turks are well aware of our views, and reiterated that a message to the Turks from Karzai, through secure official channels, would have the strongest impact in Ankara.

Public Opinions on A Return

16. (SBU) Kabul press editorials are speculating on Karzai's position on Dostum's return, wavering between Karzai's desire to generate Uzbek support through Dostum and his ability to make deals with other members of Dostum's party with greater ease.

17. (SBU) Also on July 14, Junbesh Party Central Committee

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Chairman Sayed Noorullah met with our PRT officer in Mazar e-Sharif and voiced concern over Karzai's alleged pressure on Turkey to allow Dostum to return to Afghanistan. Noorullah said Dostum's presence in Afghanistan had been disastrous for the country and his return would only worsen the situation. Noorullah said his deputies met with Independent Directorate of Local Governance Director Jelani Popal and Minister of Interior Atmar earlier on July 14 to relay that Junbesh will publicly withdraw its support for Karzai if he allows Dostum to return. Noorullah alleged that Iranian agents have visited Dostum in a bid to enlist his and his ex-commanders' support for Dr. Abdullah in exchange for cash payoffs. Noorullah claimed that Turkey is paying Dostum a USD \$5,000 monthly stipend, which does not account for the much larger sums being wired to Kabul Bank accounts of several of Dostum's ex-commanders, implying that Iran is behind the transactions.

18. (SBU) In contrast, Zabiullah Kargar, the Junbesh Youth representative to the Junbesh Central Committee, described to a PRToff in Balkh a fault line widening within the party regarding Dostum's potential return before election day. On July 6, he said that Junbesh Youth and most of the party's Uzbek base want Dostum to return before August 20, putting them in conflict with Noorullah, MP Faizullah Zaki and other top party officials. Kargar said that if Dostum does not return before that date, there may be a call by some Dostum factions to boycott the elections. Kargar accused Noorullah of moving ahead with the decision to support Karzai's reelection bid without grassroots Junbesh support, but that the party is attempting to keep its internal disputes private to protect a veneer of party unity.

19. (C) In conversations July 14 and 15 with presidential Candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani (ref E and septel), Ambassador Eikenberry raised the issue of Dostum and his possible impact on the upcoming presidential elections. Abdullah asserted that Dostum's power was still important but

not monolithic among Uzbeks, while Ghani said that some Uzbeks - intellectuals - were happy with this incident as an excuse to disavow Dostum and throw support to his campaign. The Ambassador reaffirmed the view that in the eyes of the international community, Dostum's support would taint any candidate who accepted it.

The Way Forward

¶10. (S) We will continue to press Karzai and his key Palace lieutenants for an Afghan-led solution to stop Dostum's return. Regardless whether Dostum returns, however, he will have an impact on the elections. Opposition candidate Dr. Abdullah Abdullah pointed out that Dostum's support could bring Karzai votes on August 20 even if from outside the country. Therefore we are emphasizing to Karzai the risk of any association with Dostum regardless whether he permits Dostum to return from Turkey.
EIKENBERRY